

Missouri Division of Workforce Development
Skilled Workforce Initiative
Business Retention/Early Warning Network Program
Competitive Funding Proposal
Program Year 2006
Guidelines

The state will make up to \$500,000 available under this initiative to fund four to six demonstration projects up to \$100,000 annually, and multi-region applications up to \$175,000 annually. Applications must be received by March 31, 2006 and are subject to availability of funds. The Division of Workforce Development (DWD) reserves the right to limit awards within local areas in an effort to evenly distribute funds statewide.

Competitive grants will be awarded to the Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs) that have designed comprehensive, innovative, and collaborative programs that would implement a Business Retention Program, which include an Early Warning Network. Successful grant recipients will be those regions that demonstrate the greatest opportunity for success because of strong relationships with economic development organizations that are identified and already in place. The Division is reserving \$250,000 in WIA 25% funding to provide additional services under this initiative (see project design section).

I. Executive Summary

Include a short description of the project, local collaboration, outcomes and leveraging of local resources, including local activity funds (10% of the Title 1B formula funding streams).

II. Project Narrative

Purpose

The Business Retention/Early Warning Network is funded by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) 25% funds and is administered by DWD and the LWIB. Through this program, Missouri is able to provide funding grants to LWIBs for the purpose of funding a Business Retention Coordinator (BRC). The BRC is responsible for assembling and leading a local team of business retention experts. Through the monitoring of formal and informal indicators of business distress, the BRC and the team is responsible for identifying at-risk industries within a community and leveraging resources and assistance designed to avert layoffs and closings when possible.

Strategic Partnerships

The application should identify the key economic development partner(s) in the region, their role in the project and describe how the program and network will operate within the region. The application will be submitted by the WIB and must

reflect a partnership involved in the implementation of the Early Warning Network that includes but is not limited to the following: the WIB, the local economic development organization(s) and/or chambers of commerce, the local Rapid Response Coordinator, the local DWD Business Representative, labor representation, and local utility company representation. The application should also describe how local partners will collaborate with staff from the Department of Economic Development's (DED) Business & Community Services and DWD Rapid Response.

The application should specifically identify which partners will serve on the region's business retention committee team and other related partners that may be involved on an as-needed basis.

Statement of Need

Priority will be given to those applications that utilize local labor market information, including emerging industries to target, skills gap data, and other useful data provided by MERIC. The application should demonstrate, where appropriate, coordination with an Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWP). Provide examples of jobs that could have been saved had a program been in place five years ago.

Project Design

The Workforce Investment Board and/or its designee, in consultation with the region's primary economic development organization(s), will hire the Business Retention Coordinator. The individual selected for the Business Retention Coordinator position shall be employed after approval is received from DWD. Rapid Response Coordinators may not be used in lieu of the Business Retention Coordinator.

Include a description of the program's design and its connection to economic development, implementation (how does it work) including the role of partner agencies, and strategies used to identify at-risk businesses. If a business retention strategy already exists, provide a description of it and how it could be improved.

Successful applications need to address how the business retention strategy is directly tied to economic development both locally and through DED's Business Services and MERIC. In addition, the applications should explain how the business retention strategies planned for the region will not duplicate and will coordinate with other related programs and resources.

The Division is reserving \$250,000 in WIA 25% funding to provide additional services under this initiative. In the event the project is funded, additional services will be available to the grantee for specific business retention assessments, such as pre-feasibility studies. DWD will contract directly with a

firm to provide these services for the grantees to utilize. (Note: These services are not considered a part of the RFA.)

In addition, the Division will hire a firm experienced in the provision of early warning network services to provide technical assistance and training to the selected regions to help build a local business retention network.

The local Business Retention Committee, based on its members and its partners, should have access to important sources of data that the Committee can use in implementing a Business Retention Program. This includes, but is not limited to: Labor Market Information (MERIC), layoff data from unemployment filings, WARN notices, public loan defaults, Dun & Bradstreet reports and utility company reports of usage drops. These formal indicators should validate any informal sources of information received by the team.

This section should also include a timeline for the project, including milestones; short and long-term goals for the overall project.

Program Performance/Outcomes

Provide information on the program operator's past performance providing business retention services. All grant projects shall be performance-based with specific measurable performance outcomes and should include at a minimum:

- ❑ Numbers and names of businesses assisted;
- ❑ Number of jobs saved and corresponding wage rates;
- ❑ Summary of strategies used and the outcomes per strategy;
- ❑ Measured increases in productivity; and
- ❑ If applicable, verified higher post-training wages of participating employees.

Staffing Qualifications

While it is not applicable to include the staffing qualification descriptions within this application, each grantee will be required to notify DWD in writing of any Business Retention Coordinator personnel changes during implementation of this initiative.

III. Use of Funds Policy

Reimbursable costs are part of the approved budget in the final grant award and can include the following expenses:

- ❑ Salary for a dedicated, fulltime Business Retention Coordinator;
- ❑ Fringe Benefits for the Business Retention Coordinator; and
- ❑ Travel, equipment, and supplies for the Business Retention Coordinator.

Only costs incurred between July 1, 2006 and June 30, 2007 are eligible to be included in this project.

IV. Budget

The RFA budget submission guidelines prescribed are to be followed.

V. Project Reporting

The RFA project reporting guidelines prescribed are to be followed.

VI. Evaluation and Scoring

Proposals will be evaluated by an interagency team. Scoring criteria will be based on the following critical program elements:

35% Project Design and Innovation

Priority will be given to projects using LMI data to show local economic needs including the use of local skills gap analysis information. Explain how this fits into the local WIB plan to avert layoffs and build a stronger business network.

25% Strategic Partnerships

Firmly established and committed partnerships are vital to the success of Business Retention coordination and development of an Early Warning Network. Priority will be given to projects that use established business and community relationships while bringing in those businesses and community partners that have not been part of the commitment in the past.

20% Performance/Outcomes

Design of how the performance outcomes listed will be measured and verified.

20% Budget

Priority will be given to those applications that propose the best use of funds to build business retention services while leveraging the use of other funding sources for this project and in the future.

VII. Reservation Clauses

The RFA reservation clauses prescribed are to be followed.

VIII. Procurement

The RFA procurement guidelines prescribed are to be followed.

Proposals should be submitted to the attention of Roderick Nunn, Division of Workforce Development, 421 East Dunklin, P.O. Box 1087, Jefferson City, MO 65102
E-mail: roderick.nunn@ded.mo.gov Fax: 573-522-9496.

Questions regarding this proposal should be submitted to Amy Deem, Division of Workforce Development, 421 East Dunklin, P.O. Box 1087, Jefferson City, MO 65102
E-mail: amy.deem@ded.mo.gov or by phone at 573-526-8271.